

# PRISON LIFE IN TEXAS.

## Capture, Imprisonment and Escape of J. N. Howard, Co. "E," 32 Iowa Volunteers.

### CHAPTER III.

We now began to look around for a good opportunity to make our escape as we did not like the fare, so we organized a company to make a tunnel because this seemed the safest way. The tunnel was commenced in the night and inside of a shanty. We commenced by digging a hole about three feet deep and carrying the dirt to a hole where a well had been dug. There were also other places or holes where dirt had been taken out for the purpose of daubing shanties. These furnished good dumping places for earth taken from our tunnel. From this hole in the cabin, the tunnel was started toward the stockade, which was 10 rods away. It was dug 10 feet the first night, one man working at a time with a butcher knife and half of a canteen. He placed the dirt in a sack. A man just behind took it and passed to another who in turn handed it to a third. Thus from man to man it went till it was out of the hole. It was a tedious job but was completed in three weeks. We went to open it the night following its completion, but a Judas in the company discovered the mines to our guards. He could not withstand the temptation to profit by betraying his comrades as there was an inducement for any one who would report attempts to escape; they would give a parole of honor. They would be allowed to stay on the outside and to pass around camp at leisure, the guard came in and caused the hole to be filled up. Then we commenced another way by which means there was several of the boys escaped. It was accomplished in this way—there was a cart that was allowed to be kept for the purpose of hauling dirt and rubbish out of camp. In this cart two men could lay down side by side then the dirt would be thrown on them until they were completely covered up then taken out side and dumped with the rest of the rubbish. In this way I was going to try to get out, there was two of them went out and I was going the next load but they were detected and brought back and placed in the guard house, so you see I failed. It seemed that I was doomed to stay there—I failed in every attempt. By this time my money was all gone and I had to resort to some means to make a living so we bought some cow horns and went to work making combs and tooth picks. These things we would trade for anything that we could eat. Sometimes we would work all day making a comb and trade it off at night for a sweet potato or a pint of meal.

I was very anxious to send a letter to my father, I knew he would be very anxious about me, no chance offered for several months, but finally there were some chaplains, who had been captured and were sent home. With one of these chaplains I sent a letter to my cousin who lived in Illinois, as I didn't know where my father was for he had moved to Nebraska. I knew that my cousin knew where he was. This letter was written on a piece of very coarse brown paper. I had no pencil so I had to make me a pen out of a stick. I made some ink from maple bark by boiling it in water. This letter was a curiosity to my friends and was read by all the neighbors, then sent to my father. Until this time my father thought I was killed in battle as it was so reported in the papers. About this time there was a great excitement in the rebel camp because Price was about to start on his last raid to the Mississippi river. They took all the troops away from the prison that they could spare.

When all was properly organized they started off with the idea that they were going to drive all the blue coats out of the country West of the Mississippi river, but they failed to accomplish the work that they expected to do and they had nothing to say when they returned, we joked then in a way they didn't like. Our boys would frequently feel in a mood to sing patriotic songs to them, this they didn't like. We were always too much for them in a contest of banter and ridicule.

Another time they were sold out very badly. There was a pilot one of our vessels who was captured with us, he had his little boy with him and there was a little rebel who was of the same age. The little rebel sent a challenge to our little pilot to fight. The father was consulted in regard to the matter and his reply was that if the boy could have a fair chance he might fight the rebel. This the guard said he could have so the rebel formed a ring on the outside. The prisoners did the same, on the inside the boys took their station in the gate way and commenced their work. They stood square to one another for some time striking like men but they got tired of that and clinched. After wrestling a while our little man threw his antagonist and pounded him until he was satisfied. I never before heard such yelling and cheering or saw such throwing of hats in the air over so small a thing, the guards walked away with nothing to say.

About this time all the prisoners that were wounded at Pleasant Hill were brought in and swelled our number to 5000. Among the rest was Mr. Irwin, the man I tried to

assist when he was shot in the neck. The poor fellow suffered untold agony and nearly died. I did not think he could live but he was with me now in the prison. To get him home to his friends was my pleasure as well as desire. It had been rumored that there was to be an exchange of prisoners to take place soon and we were in great hopes that our time of staying there was nearly at an end. Well the paroling officers came that evening which fact was noised around in the prison. This news was too good to credit but we took courage, so much so that we hardly slept that night. In the morning we soon found out that there were only two hundred to be paroled and who it was we did not know but soon found that it was those that had been there longest. Some of them had been there for more than a year, the poor fellows fairly leaped for joy. They could not believe that they would be exchanged since they had been promised this before and were taken to Red river a distance of one hundred miles, where they expected to meet our boats to take them home. Great was their sorrow when they found no boats there the exchange had played out and they must go back to the prison.

It was in the winter, some of them were bare-footed. Their feet were very sore and bleeding. These boys belonged to the 18 Iowa—a grand old regiment and I was more than glad to see them go but I was desirous to remain there still, no telling how long. There were two of these boys who were staying with the first Iowa cavalry of whom I have spoken before, as they were worthy of mention although I was not acquainted with them but had talked to one of them two or three times.

After this exchange took place, John Dod came to my quarters and told me that he would like to have me go and live in the shanty with them as two of the boys had gone and that I could bring one of the best boys we had in the company with me. I thanked him and said that I would speak to the rest of the boys about it. I thought I would go and let him know that evening but not then as I did not want to abruptly leave my own comrades and go off with strangers but when I spoke to them about it they all told me to go that they would like the chance of getting out of the storm themselves and for me to go. I found them very agreeable company.

Sickness became very bad in camp—I went every day to see the boys. One day I found George Williams, one of my company very poorly, he had been sick for several days and I was uneasy about him. The next morning I saw him walking down to meet me. As he approached I said "how do you feel this morning?" "I feel very poorly but I believe if I had some wheat bread I would get well," I thought "poor boy you won't last long!" I tried to hide my feelings, but couldn't, the boy turned around and walked off towards his quarters. I thought then of some bread or a kind of crackers that I had prepared in case I should make my escape which I was continually trying to do. I called him back and gave him those crackers. He took them with him. The next morning he came back. I said, "how are you this morning?" "Well, I feel better; I think I will get well, but if it had not been for your kindness in giving me the crackers, I should have died." He got well and went home to his friends. I saved many others in the same way. The boys all knew who I came to in time of trouble, I will describe another act of cruelty. I had been to hear a sermon preached by one of the prisoners. After meeting was over, I went to see some of the boys. Sitting on the ground, we talked for an hour. There were three of us together. We had our hands locked over our knees while talking. The guard drew up his gun and shot Mr. Shoemaker threw the hand and knee, the ball passing through the bowels. The poor boy fell to the ground, then tried to rise, but fell back and wallowed in his blood as a hog does when he is stuck, enduring all the agony imaginable. He lived two hours and died. While he was suffering in this way the officer in command rode his horse through the crowd of prisoners that had collected together, swinging his revolver. He rode up to the dying man and cursed him for disobeying orders, which was a falsehood as he had broken no regulation. He was an honest Christian, being a member of the Baptist church. The guard that shot him made this remark: "I will get a furlough for that," and he was immediately taken off duty and was never seen there again, so you see our lives were in jeopardy all the time as we were liable to be taken out any time and shot for retaliation. About this time some of the boys were being guarded out after wood. While out one of the guards drew his gun, and shot one of the boys down without any excuse whatever only that they would always get a furlough and be allowed to go home. Right here I make mention of two boys that had made their escape, but were recaptured and brought back. A great penalty was attached to a person who tried to make his

escape and was caught. For punishment they were tied by the thumbs to the limb of a tree so that their toes barely touched, for an hour, then were turned back in the prison with the rest of us. Time passed on in this way until the first of November, when there was another exchange to be made. As before stated, I was greatly disappointed, and was destined to remain where I was, no telling how long, but the first Iowa boys were exchanged and marched out of camp, bidding us good-bye. They left me with a heavy heart, in fact I really felt home-sick, as it was the first time that I had ever been under guard, but here I was with the enemy all around me with loaded guns and holding me fast.

After those prisoners were gone we were allowed to go out side under guard and cut timbers to make winter quarters, now we had to do this work for ourselves. After the timber was cut we were furnished a team and wagon to haul it. We went to work and built the shanties, covered them with clapboards, made a fireplace in it and made it as comfortable as possible. There were 9 of us living together.

By this time our clothing had worn out, in fact, we could hardly keep our garments together. Many took their hats to mend the seat of their pants. The tail of the coat would be taken to patch their pants but finally our government sent us some blankets and other clothing a great plenty but of course they had to pass through the hands of the rebels before they came in our hands. The result was the robe got the most. The next morning after the clothing came out the rebel guard came out with splendid U. S. clothing on with U. S. blankets wrapped around them for the poor fellows had no overcoat to keep them warm. Well time passed about the same. We kept ourselves busy making combs, tooth picks and rings as this was all we could do to keep from starving, material for making these things was scarce and hard to get. The backs of gutta-percha combs were very valuable as we worked them up into finger rings and there was a case of the same material that was made into rings and brought \$75.

The first of February there was a call for cooks and waiters on the sick boys at the hospital. The doctor in attendance belonged to my regiment and as he was a friend of mine he called on me. I told him that I could not bare to see the boys suffer and die as they did there. He suggested that I might cook for them. I accepted this offer, and went out to the hospital. There I fared better as I could go some distance from the camp to gather greens for the sick. Of course I was out on parole of honor or I should have improved the opportunity and started for God's country. I would gather a sack of greens, go back to camp and boil them with a very small allowance of pork. This with a small piece of corn bread was a dainty dish for the sick. Now my readers I would like to picture the terrible suffering of this place. I still look back to it with horror. There were men that, but a short time before, were strong who bid fair to see their four score years were now a walking skeleton. I could span their thigh with my hand and still they were walking around, in fact these men looked more like monkeys than human beings.

The morning of the sick and dying was constant day and night. I know I fail in my attempt to describe the suffering of those sick and starved prisoners. The attendants on the sick lived in shanties some distance from the hospital. In one of those shanties lived some of the 6th Kansas. I saw one of these boys suffering with sore eyes—it seemed that he was entirely blind, but as sore eyes were so common I thought nothing of it, but in a short time I was attacked with sore eyes. I commenced to doctor them with such remedies as we had at hand but all I did gave no relief. I had nothing to doctor them with but flax seed for polities. Finally the flax seed gave out and there was no more to be had. In this strait I had to resort to other remedies and I made a poultice of the bark of a basswood root. This I applied to my eyes just before laying down at night. I found my eyes got easy and I fell asleep and slept all night, something I had not done for a week, in fact they were so bad that I could not bear the light to shine on them. The next morning the inflammation subsided so much that I could see without pain. I still kept on using the basswood poultice until the inflammation seemed entirely gone. Yet they were in a bad condition. When I found that this remedy had done so much good for me I happened to think of the blind boy living with the sixth Kansas. I went to the shanty which was some distance off. I found him there all alone, the other boys having gone out. I said good morning to him he tried to look up but could not see as he was entirely blind but he turned his head toward me and said, good morning. I said, "I see you have sore eyes." He made answer: "I have very bad eyes," I told him I had sore eyes but they were better now. I then asked him what remedies he had been using. I found he had been using the same remedy that I had except the basswood. I then told him what I had done, and also promised to get him a poultice. I procured the poultice for him and fixed it ready to apply. He seemed very grateful to me for the interest I had taken in him.

Ever since I had been a prisoner I had been trying to devise some plan to make my escape. I had been there now over one year and still no prospect of ever getting away. While thinking thus one of my comrades Packard by name came out of the prison with a sick man to the hospital. Packard told me that he had found a Union man that was on guard who had been pressed into the rebel service and he would let him out if he would risk the other guard. Packard told him he would think of it during the day and if he made up his mind to go he would go at ten o'clock that night. He told me of his prospects of getting out. Jewitt, another comrade, and myself proffered to go with him, although we knew that it was a hazardous undertaking. We made up our mind to "get out of that place or die in the attempt."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

Wasday has terrors for the Swedish servant girl. And no wonder, for in the land of the midnight sun wasday is almost as important as moving day is in this country. It never comes but once a month there, so the newly arrived servant, remembering how much work it is to wash clothes in Sweden, is dismayed when she is told that every Monday is wasday. It even is asserted that rumors of this rouch Swedish and keep girls from coming to this country. They cannot grasp the idea that stationary tubs, washing machines and wringers work miracles on wasday, says the New York Press.

It is a difficult and intricate undertaking to have your washing done in Sweden. That is why well to do people have wasday once a month and poor people rub out their clothes once a fortnight. Not that they wear soiled garments, though, for they change three or four times a week and store the dirty clothes in great chests, which are built into the attic for that purpose. At the end of each month the wash is brought down and sorted out, according to quality and condition. Then the real struggle begins. Five or six women, professional washers, come in and begin to scour and rub. Each piece is put through this process in three separate waters. Then they pour boiling water on the white garments 13 times in succession, and finally let them lie overnight in a weak lye made by pouring water through a bag containing soap and wood ashes.

The next morning the tubs are placed on a sledge and drawn by a horse to the public washhouse. There the women take garment after garment and beat it with a paddle, holding it with one hand in a trough, through which flows a stream of water. The wash is then put back into the tubs and hauled home. Two men now come in to help, and the work of bluing and rinsing begins. A great tub, 6 or 7 feet in diameter, is filled with indigo water. One man takes his place beside to turn the immense wringer, and the other stands ready to carry the tubs of clothes to the attic. Clothes rarely are dried in the open air in Sweden. Housewives are too tidy there to run the risk of an extra speck of dust.

When the clothes have dried, they are hauled away again to be ironed. The women who come in to do the washing usually are the wives of those who keep the ironing house, so that all the business is kept in the family. From the ironers the washing comes home as smooth as the cheek of a summer girl and so white it makes you think of a snow-drift, while its fragrance is like that of sweet spring flowers. It is a tedious and expensive process to get your clothes washed in Sweden, but when you receive them again they are free from the odor of fried ham or optum fumes so well known to the nose of the people here.—Chicago Record.

Those Fairy Stories  
It is a peculiar belief among the youngsters of many families that the new baby sister or brother is the gracious gift of the family physician, and this belief is generally based upon the solemn assurance of papa and mamma, who have to tell some fairy story in order to tide over those events that occur occasionally in the best regulated families.

Now and then a boy takes the law into his own hands and makes a mess of it. An instance of this kind was related at the last meeting of the medical society.

It seems that the young son of a well known merchant and the young son of a well known doctor were very chummy, and the latter accompanied the former one afternoon on an advertising expedition. The advertising was done by means of a paint brush being quickly traced over any smooth piece of wood or stone encountered and called upon the male population to purchase their trousers from Brown, Well, in the evening the doctor's hopeful returned, and his paternal derivative asked him what he had been doing during the day.

"Advertising," quoth the boy.

"Advertising whom?" inquired the father.

"You and Mr. Brown" (the merchant).

"Me?"

"Yes."

"How did you advertise me?"

"Oh, we fixed up a sign that said, 'Buy your trousers from Brown and your babies from Dr. Jones,'" said the boy calmly.

The doctor gasped for breath, thinking that the boy was having undue fun with him, but he soon found out that he was being misled, telling the truth, and it cost him money the next day to go over the boy's route and rub out all the advertisements.—Kansas City Journal.

The Napkin With a Pat.  
The water is an institution against which our aesthetic sense is often in revolt. In a club he is tolerable because you can put him in a uniform and otherwise mitigate his incongruities, but elsewhere his incongruous devotion to the napkin with an obtrusive pat is offensive to a fastidious taste.—Speaker.

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**Dr. Price's Cream Baking Powder**  
**Children Cry for Pitcher's Castoria.**

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